THE UNITARIAN.

Vol. I. JANUARY 1, 1834. No. 1.

THE UNITARIAN.

The general objects of this work have been already set forth in the prospectus. And as its character will be better judged of by the manner in which it shall be conducted than by any prolix statement of our plan, we shall not trouble our readers with a lengthened preface.

One word, however, respecting the character of our doctrinal articles. In our own immediate vicinity, the discussion of such topics as the Trinity and the doctrines of Calvinism will perhaps appear like taking a step backwards into the region of by-gone controversy, and as being uncalled for by the prevailing state of religious opinions amongst us, now that Unitarianism has happily become so well established in our community. But it must be borne in mind that we are writing, not for our own community simply, but for the country at large, for sections upon which Unitarianism is but just now dawning. With those, then, to whose minds the argument on this subject has long been so familiar as to have now become almost stale, let this be our apology for reviving the argument and giving to it so large a space on our pages.

A word more, as to one other point — our title, The Unitarian. It is objected, as we anticipated it would be, that it savours of sectarianism. We selected this title, — not indeed, we trust, in a sectarian spirit, that is, with the view of

exciting divisions and fostering animosities, nor yet to help a party-object, — but simply to show our colours. Unitarians are every day charged with concealing their sentiments, with the desire of smoothing over their peculiarities in religious opinion. Now in order to meet this charge, we want our work to go forth bearing on its front the principles we hold. And besides, — in an age when error is so rife, we conceive it to be all-important to follow closely in the steps of the Apostle, "*glorying* in the cross of Christ;" not "hiding the light under a bushel," but setting it forth "upon a candle-stick." In common with our brethren, we look longingly for peace; yet we must say we have no sympathy, we cannot sympathize, with those who, for the sake of peace, are willing to consent even to that dishonourable peace which yields the ground to a system of faith of whose corruptness and pernicious effects every day is witness. We feel that Unitarians owe a duty to their faith, a solemn, a weighty duty, — that this cause is the cause of God, of Christ, the hope of the world, — and that we have no right to shrink from it, even seemingly. Believing thus, we would avow this cause openly, unequivocally. If the consequence be war, we shall deplore it, but we cannot think the blame will be ours; even He who came to bring peace on earth brought first a sword. We shall therefore plainly declare what we solemnly believe to be the truth of the gospel; and we shall fearlessly expose what, guided by the principles of the gospel, we esteem error. We shall "speak the truth," — we trust it may never be otherwise than "in love." Believing those who differ from us to be no less sincere than ourselves, we shall ever be ready, while we deny their doctrines, to extend to the individuals themselves the right hand of christian fellowship and brotherhood. We believe that there is no necessary connexion between controversy touching matters of faith and that evil spirit of vituperation which would make deadly foes of all who differ from one another; and we trust, that by God's grace, we by our practice may demonstrate it.

Meantime, we commend our journal to the favour of the public, hoping for indulgence to its faults, and praying God that it may be made an instrument of good in our hands, — in its humble sphere, a light to the church, a herald of the gospel as it is in Christ Jesus, — a means of redemption to many from the sad gloom of false views of religion, on the one hand, — from the fearful, and, as it would seem, the wide-yawning gulf of infidelity, on the other.

THE EDITORS.

A Letter to the Editors, on the Religious Condition and Wants of the Community, etc.

PERMIT me to express to you, Messrs. Editors, the satisfaction I have received from the prospectus of THE UNITARIAN. Believing, as I do so firmly, that the truths we hold as the gospel of Jesus Christ are most intimately connected with the dearest interests of man, that they are truths eminently calculated to elevate and refine his character, to develope and strengthen whatever is pure and generous and excellent in his nature, to free him from sin and the power of all debasing influences, and to make him what he should be, what he was most obviously designed to be, — like his Creator, — and, by their influence on the individual character, to nourish whatever is lovely in social and domestic life, and send abroad through society the vigorous and healthy streams of integrity, benevolence, and piety, I cannot but rejoice that a publication, of the character you propose, is forthcoming, and I trust that, by the blessing of God, it will be as successful as it is necessary.

Although your work will be mainly devoted to the explanation and defence of Unitarianism, I readily believe, what you would wish to be inferred from the prospectus, that its character will not be sectarian.* In advocating the cause of Unitarianism, you present the claims of *Christianity*. You will send your

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* I wish that, some time or other, you would give the public an article on Sectarianism, and explain the meaning of the term, which I fear is but little understood.

work among "the people," not that, appealing to their prejudices and antipathies, you may gather them into the circle of a sect, — the ignoble aim of a narrow and intolerant mind, but that you may give to every man, whom your words may reach, wider and more persuasive views of the great objects of his existence, of his relations and duty to God, and of his final destiny. It is necessary, indeed, that you should be employed in controversy — an irksome labour at all times; but if, with these great objects in view, you go on, with that noble spirit of honesty, generosity, and candour, so proper for those who would recommend the religion of Jesus, I doubt not that you will be eminently successful.

It would be presumptuous in me to assume the office of an adviser; but I hope you will not censure me if I make a few remarks, which a limited observation has taught me are not unimportant. Perhaps they have occurred to your own minds. From the two extreme quarters of the christian community the cry has repeatedly been heard, that Unitarians are not sufficiently explicit in the declaration of all their opinions—that they either withhold such a declaration, through timidity or an unworthy policy, or obscure their views by vague explanations. This presumptuous charge has been built upon the fact, that Unitarians, as a body, have not met the demands of their brethren to lay before the community any general creed or formulary of faith, that they have been reasonably unwilling to declare that certain sentiments belong to the faith of the whole class, which are professed only by a few individuals, from the fact that on minor points they differ considerably among themselves, and finally, from the fact that they are unwilling to adopt as their own all the unfounded inferences which others have been pleased to draw from their opinions. But however unfounded, the accusation has not been without its influence. In some minds, warped by a calumny so extensively circulated, there is a strong prejudice against us on this ground. This prejudice you can do much to remove by your example. I wish only to draw your attention forcibly to this point, when I say, Be *honest* — there is every thing in that word. You will not think me so simple or so utterly uncivil as to advise you to speak the truth. What I mean is, that the strongest and fullest *expression* of honesty in its highest sense should appear on your pages. Be open-minded, fearless. Let no one read a number of your work without feeling that he may rely on you with the utmost confidence — that you will never cover up difficulties, if such you know to exist, that you will

always distinctly state what you mean, and that you will never fear to declare whatever doctrine you believe to have been taught by Jesus Christ.

It has sometimes been said, that Unitarians speak of their opinions with diffidence, distrust, uncertainty. That they sometimes speak with *diffidence* on controverted points is true. But whether this has not been dictated by modesty is not for me to say. At least, this would be the most charitable inference. It is possible that the language they have frequently used may not have conveyed that strength of conviction which they intended to express, and thus laid the foundation for the charge to which I have alluded. It is better, however, to err in this way, than to assume that bold and arrogant tone with which presumptuous polemics would fain overawe the multitude and annihilate all opposition. May The Unitarian be entirely free from dogmatism and presumption. May it be characterized by a spirit of true charity. But, at the same time, let it assume the position which a manly and convinced mind will take without arrogance, that you are exhibiting the claims of *Christianity*. Let it be felt that you are not apologists for a set of novel opinions, but that the truths you teach are those which Jesus Christ announced, for which he died, and which are of unspeakable value to man. There is a wide difference between dogmatism and a modest confidence. The voice of truth is ever lofty and commanding; the tones of error, though venerable in its years, are only insolent and haughty.

As this is nothing more than a familiar epistle, you will not censure me for a want of method. I rejoice that your work will be written for *the people* — that it is designed for all classes of our community.

To one of these classes I would direct your attention. In not a few of our country towns where Unitarianism has not yet gone, there are many individuals, the general tenor of whose lives is very commendable; they are good neighbours and good citizens; much respected for their integrity, and exert a beneficial influence throughout the sphere in which they live. But they make no pretensions to religion, attend church very infrequently, and would not loudly complain, perhaps, if its doors were closed. They do not utterly reject Christianity. The force of education is sufficiently strong to prevent such a consummation. They are not willing to be called skeptics or unbelievers; still, they have no fixed reli-

gious opinions. The notion is deeply imbedded in their minds that the doctrines of Calvinism are Christianity itself; and so great are the prejudices of education, and so strong the associations of custom, that they are unable to conceive how any other interpretation, than that which they have always heard, should be put on the passages of Scripture which have been supposed to declare those doctrines. Hence, being men of plain, common sense, who usually take the most direct way to their conclusions, they practically reject the gospel. They tell you that it can do them no good, and that it is absurd. On these points they frequently argue with great shrewdness and force. They tell you that the doctrines of Christianity are at war with the suggestions of that reason which God has given us for the conduct of life. And they likewise urge that many, if not the most, of those who have been converted and are under the full influence of religion are worse citizens and neighbours than they were before, — that they are more presumptuous, dogmatical, and exclusive, and less modest, candid, and benevolent, — that they are more crafty and calumnious, and less generous and open-hearted, — that while they bestow largely of their substance for distant objects of charity, they are less attentive to the wants of their neighbours and the good of the community in which they live. I am not asserting that these men are always candid, that they always reason well, nor that prejudice may not have much to do with their inferences. Still, confounding, as they almost unavoidably do, error with truth, the corruptions of Christianity with its simple doctrines, it is not unnatural that they should be anxious to remove themselves as far as possible from the sphere of its influence. Following these is another class, who have the same general views of Christianity, but whose conduct is not so estimable, and who, of course, are more beyond the reach of religious instruction. The great object is to revive and quicken these men; to awaken the spirit of inquiry among them; to direct their search after truth, and to teach them what is truth; to make them feel that there is such a thing as true religion, however there may have been many counterfeits in the world; that it is necessary to their well-being, and that man was made to be religious; to teach them the nature of Christianity, and that it contains the noblest truths, suited to their faculties and condition as rational and moral beings, and to their wants as sinners; to teach them their relations and duty to God, and the great objects of life. The influence which this class of our citizens exerts is very con-

siderable. I hope that you will regard them with especial interest. You need expect but little interference here. Those of our Orthodox brethren who are at all acquainted with the case, know as well as I do that their teaching cannot influence these men. It cannot reach them. They will not hear it. Should your journal fortunately go among them, you may do much, simply by showing them that Christianity is Unitarianism, — by exhibiting to them truths, which, while they are a revelation from God, are, at the same time, coïncident with principles which reason has adopted. My faith is strong that Unitarianism is the power of God unto salvation, and I devoutly hope that you will be an instrument in conveying its simple truths to those who are beyond the reach of any other influence.

The present aspect of the world, in a religious point of view, is interesting and impressive. Old authority is gone. The influence of prescription is gone. The human mind is passing from blind obedience to rules and dogmas, for which it could give no better reasons than the assertions of its teachers, to a condition in which its convictions of truth shall be established on the basis of its own independent investigations. It is gradually feeling its way to something surer and better. In such a state of things, which, in all probability, will long continue, it becomes us to observe the many and conflicting elements which are at work in society. Generally speaking, it may be said that most civilized communities are awakened to the value of religious truth — that truth which concerns the highest interests of man and his immortal destiny. The convictions of its reality and importance are striking deeper and deeper. The mind is anxious, and intent on the great question, What is truth? It has thrown off the shackles of authority and asserted its right to investigate truth for itself. But, so long has it been confined, its limbs are enfeebled and its sight has grown dim. In that restless and feverish state, the consequence of emancipation, it is eager to hurry on. But it is impeded by many causes. It has not yet cut off its old associations. It is still influenced by fear, and error is yet venerable. And what is more, it has hardly discerned the sources of truth. It eagerly asks, What is truth? but has not yet determined where it is nor how it is to be found. There is heard the discord of a thousand voices. All would be taught, but all would be teachers. An uninterrupted conflict is going on between hope and the conscious-

ness of freedom and an earnest looking for truth, on the one hand, and on the other, a feeling of amazement at the magnitude of the objects which open before the mind, united with fear, anxiety, and doubt, and the remains of superstition and dogmatism, and the strong associations which still cling around old errors. We rejoice at the emancipation of the mind. But few of us consider, as we ought, the evils which are the necessary consequence of its throwing off the shackles of a prescribed faith. While preceding ages were endeavouring to govern its growth by dogmas and creeds of their own devising, they cast no prophetic glance to that point in the future when it would burst those envelopements and pursue its own way. For such an event, consequently, they made no preparation, either by teaching the importance of truth, or supplying the mind with principles for its search. And now that time has come, and we see the result. Large masses of society not only have no settled religious opinions, but they hardly know the sources of truth, and are at a loss from what point to begin or how to pursue their investigations. The mind, I repeat, has cut itself away from a prescribed faith, and hopefully launched forth on the wide sea of speculation. But without compass or star to guide its way, amazed and anxious, and often looking back to the untroubled waters it has left, it is hurried on by the winds of expectation, and driven back by fear, or swept by the eddying gusts of novel theories; or, despairing to reach the coast whose shadowy line it dimly discerns in the distance, it suffers itself to be borne swiftly along the smooth, deceitful current of unbelief.

Such is one feature in the present condition of the religious world. But I would confine these remarks to our own community. I have no disposition to detract from the noble and well earned fame of our ancestors. Still, it is not wonderful that sometimes they should have erred. Until recent times, nearly all the religious instruction received by the people at large was communicated by the pulpit. Its tones were always authoritative. The clergy announced doctrines which they knew would not be disputed. Their style of preaching, with a very few exceptions, was unvaried. They constantly used a set of phrases, for the most part undefined, which were supposed to contain the fundamental points of an orthodox faith. They recommended the reading of the Scriptures, as a means of edification and general instruction, but did not foster a spirit of inquiry, and gave their hearers no principles of

interpretation, no guides for the pursuit of truth. The mind was at last awakened to religious investigations, and the general interest in such pursuits has been increasing ever since.

We may now observe the results of the former state of things; and they will best be seen by an example. If you go into one of our villages where the spirit of inquiry has not long existed to any considerable extent, you will find those who still cling to the Orthodox views in which they were educated, but who can give few reasons for the faith that is in them, and when pressed by difficulties are unable to meet them; a few, holding the same opinions, whose faith rests on a surer basis; a few, also, and but a few, who have worked their way to better views; and then, a class more numerous than all the others, who may be said to have no religious views, or next to none; and, finally, some who do not spurn the name of Deist. If I may judge from what I have seen and heard, this illustration will apply to many of our towns in the interior. In other places, where the spirit of inquiry has existed longer, there is, of course, more rational conviction on religious subjects. Still, wherever you go, you will find too many who have no settled opinions, whose notions of the nature of religion are vague and indistinct, who need to be told not so much what is true as how to acquire it, and who want the right principles of interpreting the Scriptures. Those among them who are true inquirers are often perplexed, anxious, and fearful. They would receive the truth with gladness, they would pursue it earnestly; but they need to be guided by those lights which those have found who are now before them. The errors which they have been wont to respect are yet venerable. The force of education is still strong. They are afraid of something, they hardly know what — afraid, perhaps, that some inauspicious breeze may strand their frail bark on the barrenness of infidelity. They need, therefore, to be encouraged. They need to be told that the very highest reverence for God and truth demands that they modestly, but fearlessly, pursue their inquiries, — that they reject every doctrine, however dear or venerable, which is not sanctioned by revelation, and receive without hesitation whatever they believe God has declared, be the anticipated consequences what they may.

I doubt not that your journal will direct its efforts to these important objects, and I pray God that it may be successful.

I have extended this letter to an unreasonable length, and will conclude by again expressing my satisfaction at the appearance of your prospectus.

Yours, very sincerely,

A Unitarian.

Cambridge, Dec. 3, 1833.

A Holy Life the most Persuasive Argument.

For a short time after the ascension of Christ, God wrought with his apostles by signs and wonders; but the arm of power was soon drawn back into heaven, and the work of propagating the gospel was then left to human charity. Now there is nothing that tends so much to retard the progress of the christian religion as the unholy lives of its professors; on the other hand, there is nothing so well adapted to aid its propagation as the holy lives and conversation of its professors. To show this, we have only to glance at the history and present state of the christian church.

The conversation of the apostles was worthy of the gospel. They were blameless in the sight of enemies as well as of friends. Malice itself could find no charge against them, except that they were defenders of a faith every where spoken against. Their first disciples were imitators of them. "See how these Christians love one another!" was the remark even of the Pagans concerning them. In an accusation brought against the early Christians by the celebrated Pliny, he states that it was a part of their regular religious service to bind themselves by an oath to lead pure and honest lives. While this was the character of the christian church, it grew in spite of the rage of the persecutor. The blood of its martyrs was a seed from which sprang a most abundant harvest. The purity with which the Christians lived, the fortitude with which they suffered, the triumphant hope with which they died, called forth the admiration of their enemies, and often changed them from enemies to friends. The very men who bound the martyr to the stake

often left it Christians. The name of Jesus was, ere long, preached throughout the then known world. Christianity soon mounted the throne of the Cæsars. But its elevation was a curse to its prosperity. Its ministers, when they put on purple and scarlet, dropped the garment of righteousness; and, when they began to fare sumptuously in kings' palaces, they forgot the example of the meek and lowly Jesus. Corruption and spiritual death brooded over the church; and then its borders ceased to be enlarged, except by the power of the sword. There was then nothing to draw unbelievers into its fold. The conduct of Christians was no better, and hence there was no reason to suppose their faith any better, than that of the surrounding heathen. And from that time to the date of the Reformation, hardly any accessions, except by force, were made from Paganism to Christianity. Since the Reformation, the moral character of Christendom has been constantly improving; and the prospects of the missionary enterprise have been in the same proportion constantly brightening.

But now, what is the greatest obstacle to the christianizing of the world? It is the unchristian conduct of those who call themselves, or are called, Christians. Our North American Indian will point to his white neighbours, and say: "These are the men who first taught us the vice, and who give us the means, of intoxication. These are the men who cheat us and lie to us, and teach us to cheat and lie. They call themselves Christians, and want us to be Christians too. But our religion never taught us to take advantage of each other's ignorance, or to take by violence or fraud the property of those at peace with us. Our great Spirit approves not of such deeds nor of those who practise them, nor will He permit his children to embrace your religion." The Hindoo will point to the European or American sailors, and say: "These are your Christians — men who blush not to wallow in vices which we abhor even to name. Better that a few devotees should crush themselves beneath Juggernaut's car, better that a few widows should fall victims to their nuptial vows, than that our people should be stained with such crimes as these christian sailors commit." The African will point with a tearful eye and an aching heart to the slave-ship, as she leaves his shore. "There were men here," he will say, "not long since, who tried to persuade us to become Christians. That cursed ship was manned by Christians. The religion of our fathers did not teach them

to send their prisoners of war into bondage in a strange land. These Christians taught us this lesson. It is Christians who send their ships across the deep hither, to lade them with the living spoils of war and treachery. We want not the religion of such men; our own is better." And to those heathen who are so situated as to behold the internal state of the christian church, what a picture must it present! "How can they," might an intelligent heathen justly say, "how can these Christians call theirs a religion of peace and love? Is it not rather one of strife and dissension, of pride and vainglorying? When we go up to worship, we reach forth the hand to every fellow-worshipper, and should disdain to feast upon a sacrifice of strife. But these men quarrel, and rail at each other, and abuse each other, even in the temple of their God. Let us keep peace among ourselves, and not endanger it by changing our religion."

Such are the wounds which Christ receives in the house of his professed friends. His avowed enemies have done his cause comparatively little harm. That cause can never flourish, till those who call themselves his friends are his friends indeed, and show themselves such by keeping his commandments. The word of God gives us reason to expect the universal supremacy of Christianity. But before that can take place, there must be a revival of pure and undefiled religion throughout Christendom, — all the inhabitants of christian countries must exhibit such a conversation as becometh the gospel; and then the gospel will have free course and be glorified. Then every ambassador, every traveller, every sailor, will be a missionary of the cross. Those who now sit in darkness will not be long in learning that justice and truth and mercy govern the hearts and lives of all who dwell in christian lands, and they too will court the beams of the Sun of righteousness. But this moral renovation in Christendom is to be produced by individual effort, by individual holiness. Let every one live as the gospel requires, and he does vastly more towards the diffusion of the gospel, than he could otherwise do, by bestowing upon benevolent objects all his time, or the whole of his property, however large.

We have seen how Paganism has thriven through the unholiness of Christians. We remark, further, that modern infidelity is a viper born and nourished in the very bosom of the christian church. The period when infidelity prevailed most in England was a time when the clergy of the estab-

lished church were indolent, dissipated, utterly careless of the souls under their charge; when the dissenting ministers were zealous, indeed, but intolerant in their zeal, and ready to commit murder and almost every other crime in the name of the Lord. We all know how completely infidelity deluged France toward the close of the last century. The priests were banished or guillotined, the churches closed, the sabbath voted out of existence by the great assembly of the nation, and prayers offered and hymns sung to the statue of liberty, in mockery of the supreme Divinity, while rivers of blood rolled down the streets of Paris at the bidding of men who literally trampled upon the cross. And all this sin was chargeable upon nominal Christians. It was the unholiness, the corruption of Christians, that made the most learned and influential men of France infidels. For many ages piety had been a rare gift among the more prominent of the French clergy. Many of them had lived in the open indulgence of the most degrading vices, had wasted, at court, at the theatre, and in riotous living, money extorted from the necessities of the people, and had evinced as little practical belief in God, heaven, and spiritual things, as if life had been a dream, the judgment a bug-bear, God and Christ fictitious personages. And the people had too willingly followed the example of their spiritual guides. They had gone statedly to the sanctuary, had heard a religious service in an unknown tongue, had partaken of the consecrated bread, and then had gone back to the world to mingle in its dissipation and its knavery, without knowing a single principle of the gospel to restrain them from iniquity. The unholy lives of its professors led thinking men to doubt, and ultimately to deny, the divine origin of Christianity. They thought the credentials of a system, which had such unworthy professors, not even worth examining; and they therefore rejected the gospel without examination. A system, which numbered among its guardians, among its priests, the friends of all manner of iniquity, they thought deserving of the most violent opposition; and they therefore strove to subvert Christianity. They succeeded, and, for a short time, made this fickle nation a nation of infidels.

In our own country the friends of infidelity have, within a very few years, made great efforts, and have met with much success. And the faults of Christians have been the chief weapons of their warfare. We have examined several numbers of a weekly paper published in Boston, devoted to infi-

delity, and have found them filled, not with arguments against the Scriptures, not with reproaches upon Christ's character, not with attempts to show any defect in the gospel system of morals; but with instances of the foolish or wicked conduct of professing Christians, with cases of fraud, or knavery, or hard-heartedness among zealous church-members, and especially with instances of religious intolerance and uncharitableness. If all professing Christians in this country had led as holy lives as our pilgrim ancestors did, we do not believe that there would be, at the present time, a dozen infidels in the land. And now, if all those, who have named the name of Christ, would be careful to adorn their profession by holy lives, if they would all love each other as brethren, and, forgetting unessential differences, unite hand and heart against their common enemies, unbelief and sin, the infidel army would be at once disbanded, infidelity would flit away like the morning mist before the brightening beams of the sun, and God's name would be hallowed by those who now blaspheme it. We may all of us, then, by recommending our religion by holy lives, aid in checking the progress of infidelity more effectually than by arguing against it ourselves or by circulating the arguments of others. A holy life is the best defence of our religion, the best apology for its claims, the best evidence of its divinity.

There are yet others besides Pagans and infidels, upon whom Christians ought to exercise a salutary influence. We refer to those who, while they profess to be Christians, so far as belief is concerned, have never professed to act under the influence of christian motives or to cherish christian hopes. When such men are urged to form religious characters, they frequently point to professors of religion and say, "What do these men more than others? They are as ready as other people to overreach in bargains, and to coin and circulate slanderous reports. They are no better husbands, fathers, neighbours, nor citizens than we are. They show as much love for the world, its pleasures, and its gains as we do; and to those sins with which they are chargeable in common perhaps with ourselves, they add the still greater sin of hypocrisy, since they profess to be better than they are, while we profess only to be what we actually are." Thus, and if not with perfect justice, yet not without ground, men of the world, in excusing themselves for the neglect of religious duty, often characterize professors of religion. But if those who have named the name of Christ were careful to depart from all

iniquity, if they maintained characters so pure that malice itself could find no fault with them, then the irreligious would witness the divine power of the gospel, would perceive and confess that it is not without efficacy, would regard with admiration a religion which preserves its disciples from sin. Were there a revival of pure religion and practical piety throughout all the churches in our land, there would be a revival of the same among people of every class and order, multitudes would devote themselves to God, and vicious indulgence would soon lose its votaries. Counsels, entreaties, will avail but little with the thoughtless and the vicious, unless backed by a holy life. As, then, we value the undying souls of those around us, as we believe that the salvation of those souls depends upon their receiving and obeying the gospel, let our conversation be as becometh the gospel.

Among the different denominations of Christians also, holiness of life goes much farther than soundness of faith in advancing the interests of any particular sect. Sects that have advocated very strange and irrational systems of faith have often grown numerous and powerful through the piety of their members. The Quakers have a mystical system of belief which it would, doubtless, puzzle many to understand. Yet, when they first appeared, they spread very fast, on account of their strict honesty, their unsullied purity, their works of charity, their love of peace, and the meekness with which they bore persecution. The Swedenborgians have a a system so obscure and complicated that it is the labour of a life to understand it thoroughly, and so irrational as to attach to every sentence in the Bible three distinct significations. Yet they are making converts through the influence of their brotherly love, their heavenly-mindedness, their peaceful lives and charitable deeds.

Reader, are you a Unitarian? you have embraced what you regard, not as an obscure and unreasonable, but as a definite, rational, and scriptural system of faith, to which many of your fellow-Christians are warmly opposed. Their opposition to you is sincere, conscientious. They honestly fear that your doctrine is not according to godliness, — that it will not bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. Upon many of them argument will have no effect, for their fears will make them deaf to argument. But the eloquence of a holy life may win them. You believe that your system is preëminently adapted to form pure and holy characters. Show, then, the superior value of your faith by your works. Be tolerant even to the

intolerant, liberal to the illiberal, charitable to the uncharitable. Be faithful to every religious, every social, every personal duty. Keep the will of God constantly before you as your rule of action. Be not disheartened, though opposition hold out long, and still seem as violent as ever; for, by persevering in a good course, if you win not the favour of man, you at least gain that of God. And in time, those who now oppose you may be brought, if not to believe with you, at least to hold fellowship with you. And then you will have the satisfaction of having overcome their enmity, without having employed a single unchristian art or weapon. Such victories have been won. We have known instances in which deep-rooted prejudice has been in this way overcome. We have one such instance yet recent in our memory. A Calvinistic clergyman from a distance was invited to settle in a town where there were several religious societies, and, among others, one of the class commonly called Unitarian. Having never been acquainted with any of this denomination before, this clergyman took the right way of learning their character, not by catechizing them, but by inspecting their conduct. He saw a pastor and people living in peace among themselves and with all around them, devoted to the public worship of God and the ordinances of the gospel, bringing up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, engaged in forwarding every charitable enterprise, giving freely of their substance and their labour, wherever it was needed for the relief of the poor, the instruction of the ignorant, and the building up of Christ's kingdom, and leading lives, almost without exception, so irreproachable that calumny itself could find no fault with them. His mind was open to conviction; and he was candid enough to express the conviction forced upon his mind. After a few weeks' residence in the place, he said: "Before I came here, I was so presumptucus as to deny to Unitarians the christian name. I now rejoice to find among the sincere disciples and friends of Christ those whom, hitherto, I have accounted his enemies. And let me learn from this henceforth to suspend my judgment with respect to my brethren, till I can know them by their fruits." Would that instances of this kind were more frequent, that men would always judge the tree to be good when they find the fruit good! But make the tree good, and make the fruit good, and, if you gain not, you at least deserve, the esteem of all your fellow-Christians. Oh that the time might come, when, among the different portions of the christian church, the only strife shall be, which

shall abound the most in brotherly love and in good works, which shall exhibit a conversation the best becoming the gospel! Then, and not till then, will the church be truly prosperous. Then, and not till then, will God and Christ regard it with unmingled approbation.

A. P. Peabody.

Letters to Trinitarians and Calvinists.

No. I.

THE TRINITY.

Christian Brethren,

You well know that Unitarian Christians are every where spoken against. You know there are individuals, in almost every place, who are constantly casting reproach upon our sentiments and character. Permit me to ask you, whether there is anything in our peculiar views of religion deserving this unceasing and universal condemnation? In order to answer this question satisfactorily, you should be thoroughly acquainted with our distinguishing articles of belief. You should also possess an intimate and correct knowledge of the external and internal history of our denomination. I would therefore solicit your patient and candid attention to a brief exposition and defence of Unitarian Christianity.

I am induced to make this request for two very substantial reasons. In the first place, I enter upon this undertaking for your special benefit. Suppose one of your worthy neighbours had been accused of falsehood. Suppose you sincerely believed the report. Should you not feel unhappy? Would not your confidence in his integrity be destroyed? But if you could soon obtain satisfactory evidence that the charge was false, should you not greatly rejoice? Would not your esteem return and your friendship be renewed? Now some of the leading men of your church have denounced Unitarians as heretics, unbelievers, and wilful deceivers. You probably believe that their accusations are well founded. We solemnly aver, that our motives, opin-

ions, and actions are misrepresented. We claim the right of self-defence. Are you not willing to hear our arguments? Should you not rejoice to learn that we are honest aud innocent, and still deserving your confidence and fellowship? Listen, then, to our statements.

In the second place, I have undertaken this work for our own particular advantage. Suppose you had been charged with the crime of murder. Suppose you were conscious of being altogether innocent. Would you not desire an opportunity to prove the accusation to be false? Now some individuals of your sect have pronounced Unitarians to be worse than the heathen. We feel this to be a very serious charge. We suppose it is believed by some whose love we are anxious to retain. We know the accusation to be unjust. We therefore demand the privilege of answering in our own behalf. We are confident that we can present testimony which will satisfy every candid person of our integrity and innocence, and of the justice of our claims to the appellation of disciples of Christ. If, then, you would do unto others in all things as you would have others do unto you, you will assuredly give a patient hearing to our expositions and arguments.

Before I proceed to the main questions at issue, you will permit me to make two preliminary observations. And first, I wish it to be distinctly understood that I speak, in this and in all future communications, in my own name. I do not claim to be the organ of any sect or party. I go to no man or body of men to ascertain what I must believe or publish. As an individual, I shall give utterance to my honest convictions, and hold myself responsible for all my statements. I shall endeavour to present a distinct outline of my religious sentiments, and to state some of the reasons on which they are founded. I do not expect, however, to differ materially from the great body of Unitarian Christians in this country.

I wish it also to be distinctly understood, that I have no intention of denouncing either the motives or sentiments or characters of any class of believers. I cherish none but the most friendly and charitable feelings towards Christians of every name. I shall not return railing for railing, but, contrariwise, blessing. But I must be permitted to mention distinctly the doctrines which I reject as erroneous, and to give you some of the honest reasons for my rejection of what you deem sacred truth. I may also have occasion to allude to

the unchristian temper and conduct of some of our professing brethren, and to show their want of conformity with the spirit and example of our common Saviour. This, the only independent, christian course, I am sure every generous and noble mind must wish me to pursue, while I hold myself ready to correct all mistakes, and to publish all candid objections to my views and reasonings.

Permit me now, christian brethren, solemnly to affirm, that, in common with all other Christians, we firmly believe in the existence and providence of One eternal, all-perfect, all-pervading Spirit, the Creator, the Preserver, the Benefactor, and the Father of the universe. With all other Christians, we believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God. With all other Christians, we believe that the Bible contains the faithful record of a special revelation from the infinite Jehovah. With all protestant Christians, we believe that the sacred Scriptures are a safe and sufficient guide of faith and practice, and that all persons have an equal and perfect right, nay, that it is their bounden duty, to interpret them for themselves. With all consistent Protestants, we believe that we are answerable to no man, to no body of men, to no church, to no council, for our religious opinions and observances; but only to our God, our Saviour, and our own consciences. With all consistent Protestants, we believe that the same principles of interpretation are to be applied to the holy writings which we apply to the contents of other books of equal antiquity and obscurity. Renouncing all allegiance to earthly masters, laying aside all human creeds and formularies of faith, acting in strict compliance with the fundamental principles of Protestantism, we make the Bible, and the Bible alone, the infallible standard of christian truth and holiness. By an honest and prayerful and persevering examination of its pages, we discover sentiments which other believers reject, and we are unable to find some doctrines which others receive. It is our great reverence for the Scriptures, our firm adherence to their plain and explicit instructions, our determination to obey God rather than men, our desire of proving all things and holding fast that only which is good, which compels us to dissent from the conclusions of some of our fellow-disciples. The most important points of difference I will now proceed to mention and illustrate.

I. We differ from some of our christian brethren in relation to *the nature of God.* They believe in what is called the doctrine of the Trinity. They believe, according to the

Andover creed, "that in the Godhead are three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and that these Three are One God, the same in substance, and equal in power and glory." Now I reject this doctrine for many satisfactory reasons; six of the most obvious I will briefly state.

As preliminary, however, to the discussion of this question, let me premise that there are two modes by which to proceed in the attempt to establish the doctrine of the Trinity, and that my argument must be shaped conformably. The one is, by producing passages of Scripture which expressly and directly teach or imply the doctrine, that there are three persons or distinctions in the Godhead; the other, by bringing together certain texts which seem to ascribe deity to the Son, and deity and personality to the holy Spirit, and coupling them with those texts which speak of the Father as God, and of God as one, hence to *infer* a triune God. This latter argument will be considered by and by. My present concern is solely with the former. Accordingly, it will be my particular object, in this communication, to show that there is no passage of Scripture which can be construed as of itself teaching or implying a threefold distinction in the Godhead; but, on the contrary, that the Deity is unequivocally and uniformly, throughout the Bible, spoken of as the holy One, and never as "the holy three in one." In pursuing my argument, I shall take the liberty of introducing such corroborative testimony as may present.

In the first place, then, I reject the doctrine of the Trinity, because it appears to me to be self-contradictory and absurd; and you well know that the human mind cannot receive a contradiction or an absurdity. You cannot believe that three and three make four, for this is a contradiction; neither can you believe that three are one, or that one is three. You cannot believe that three parts of an apple are three apples, or that three apples are but one apple; for this is an absurdity. Now let us apply these illustrations to the doctrine in question. If you say that the Father alone is a perfect Being, that the Son alone is a perfect Being, that the Spirit alone is a perfect Being, then you have three perfect Beings; and, consequently, three Gods; for God is nothing more nor less than one perfect Being. If, on the other hand, you assert that the Father alone is not a perfect Being, that the Son alone is not a perfect Being, that the Spirit alone is not a perfect Being, then you have three imperfect Beings; and, consequently, no God; for three imperfect Be-

ings can never make one perfect Being; if they could, deities without number might be formed from the hosts of created intelligences with which the universe is filled. If you affirm that the Father is not a distinct *person*, that the Son is not a distinct *person*, that the Spirit is not a distinct *person*, but that Father, Son, and Spirit are merely different names for *distinctions* in the Deity; then you give up your belief in a trinity of persons; you believe in one God, while you mystify your doctrine with unintelligible terms. Now if you will candidly examine all the ideas which you have in your minds upon this subject, without any regard to sects or creeds, I think you will arrive at one of these three conclusions: — Either that you are endeavouring to believe in three perfect Beings, and, consequently, in three Gods, which is an absurdity; or that you are endeavouring to believe in three imperfect Beings, and, consequently, in no God, which is also an absurdity; or that you do actually believe in One all-perfect, all-pervading Spirit, the only true God, which is the fundamental article of the Unitarian creed. Let me, then, ask you to investigate this point with candour, so as to ascertain if our views do not perfectly coïncide on this important question.

2. In the second place, I reject the doctrine of the Trinity, because I can find no trace of it in the Old Testament. A triune God is nowhere spoken of, and there is not a text which intimates it. It is nowhere said, and it is nowhere hinted, that there are three persons or three distinctions of any sort in the Godhead. I have read every chapter and every verse of these ancient writings, and I have never discovered one text which contains such an idea. I have never seen the slightest allusion to any such doctrine from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Malachi. I have repeatedly asked those who belong to your church to mention a single passage in the Hebrew Scriptures which either teaches or implies such a sentiment. My request has never been granted. I believe most firmly that no individual can show any such text. Now if the Trinity is revealed in these sacred books, would it not have been discovered before this period of the world? As it never has been found in their pages, is it not fair to conclude that it is not contained therein? What, then, must be our conclusion? Would the all-wise God have called a people from idolatry, would he have made them the medium of communication to other

nations, would he have given them a special revelation of his will, would he have done all this, and not so much as have disclosed his true nature in one single instance? This seems to me impossible; and as he has nowhere given them the least hint of a trinity of persons in his Godhead, this silence is conclusive evidence to my mind of the human origin of the doctrine. But I will not decide for others. I only beseech you to search prayerfully the holy records; if you find the idea of three persons or distinctions anywhere on their pages, have the goodness to send me the chapter and verse; if you should not make any such discovery, have the independence and honesty to acknowledge publicly that no trace of the Trinity can be found in the Old Testament.

3. In the third place, I reject the doctrine of the Trinity, because I never heard of its being believed by an individual of the Jewish nation. This people were peculiarly favoured by the Most High. They were entrusted with many important and divine truths. Their lawgiver, their prophets, their wise men, wrote the several books which constitute the Old Testament. These sacred writings were designed for the special benefit of their countrymen. Now can you mention the name of one Jew, from the time of Abraham to the present day, who believed that God exists in three persons or distinctions? I think not. How, then, will you account for this remarkable fact? Will you contend that the very writers and readers of the Hebrew Scriptures mistook their true meaning on the fundamental article of all religion? To my mind this supposition appears utterly inadmissible. I cannot believe the all-wise Jehovah would have permitted his benevolent designs to have been thus frustrated. I cannot admit that such ignorance on the part of the people is possible. I must, therefore, conclude that no such doctrine was ever revealed to them. I can discover no trace of it in their sacred writings, and I can hear of no individual of their whole number who ever made such a discovery. This objection is to my mind truly unanswerable. I have never seen even a plausible explanation of this insurmountable difficulty. But I would have you decide this question for yourselves. Make diligent inquiry into the religious views of the ancient church. If you can find a Trinitarian among its various members, from the period of their election to receive the knowledge of the true God to the present day, please to forward his name. If you cannot succeed in this undertak-

ing, have the independence to acknowledge the fact, and the courage to admit the necessary consequence, that no such doctrine as the Trinity is contained in their Scriptures.

4. In the fourth place, I reject the doctrine of the Trinity, because I can find no trace of it in the New Testament. The blessed Jesus was educated in the Jewish religion, and in the sentiments of his ancestors. At his baptism, he received the holy Spirit without measure. He was commissioned to make a further revelation of the will of Jehovah, who had spoken to his fathers by the prophets, but who had in no instance spoken to them of a trinity of persons or distinctions in the Godhead. Did the Saviour preach this doctrine to his disciples? Did the apostles proclaim it to the world? Did they record it in their writings? I have carefully examined every sentence of the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles, and the book of Revelation, and I have never been able to discover even one text which contains the idea that God exists in three persons or distinctions. I have repeatedly asked members of your church to mention a single passage which explicitly teaches the doctrine. No one has ever complied with my request. I do not believe any one ever can. — I think the evidence is perfectly conclusive that the apostles did not consider Jesus as belonging to the Godhead. For when he was apprehended, tried, and crucified, they all forsook him and fled; one denied him with cursing and swearing, and another betrayed his innocent blood for thirty pieces of silver. Could they have been guilty of such conduct, had they believed he was the very God? Impossible. Had the doctrine been revealed to them after the resurrection, would they not have explicitly declared it in their discourses and mentioned it in their letters? This they have not done, and, to my mind, this silence presents an unanswerable objection to the doctrine. But I would have you search the Scriptures for yourselves. Whenever you find a passage which expresses the idea of three persons or distinctions in God, please to forward it. If you can discover none of this description, I trust you will have the independence to declare your honest convictions.

5. In the fifth place, I reject the doctrine of the Trinity, because I can trace it, most satisfactorily, to a human origin. I have examined the early history of the christian church with considerable attention. I have not room to introduce extracts from the authorities which I have consulted; and, indeed, from the nature of the case, they would require many

pages. You must, therefore, read ecclesiastical history for yourselves, and I cannot doubt that you will arrive at the same conclusions with myself. In the mean time, you will permit me to state briefly the results of my investigations. I do not find that the word Trinity was applied to the Godhead until many years after the ascension of the Saviour. I have discovered no distinct trace of the doctrine for more than a century after the crucifixion. On the contrary, it appears that converts from heathenism, who had imbibed some notions of the Platonic philosophy, first introduced the germ of this sentiment among Christians. It gradually grew into a doctrine. After it had been received by many individuals, a council of priests was convoked. By the holding up of human hands it was voted into the creed. But the article, as then framed, differs materially from the modern doctrine of the Trinity. Since that period it has been voted out of the church and again into the church, as its advocates or its opposers happened to predominate. It has been altered, enlarged, diminished, and modified many times. It is even now in an unsettled state, as present controversies abundantly prove. It exists in several different forms in the various creeds of Trinitarian churches. It is explained very differently by different individuals. Perhaps no two, who profess to receive it as an article of faith, have the same views on the subject. These are my firm convictions; and all these facts serve to convince me of the human origin of the doctrine. You will, however, examine the records of the church for yourselves, and I have no doubt you will find my statements amply confirmed, even by authors who received the doctrine as truth.

6. Finally, I reject the doctrine of the Trinity on account of its injurious tendency. Permit me to explain. You all wish the gospel to be received by every member of the human family. Now the Jews already believe in Moses and the prophets. Why will they not welcome Jesus and the apostles? Because, among other reasons, you put this stumbling-block in the way. Tell them that God exists in three persons; that the Messiah is one of these persons, and the holy Spirit another; and what will be their reply? "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." So long as you inculcate the doctrine of the Trinity as a part of Christianity, so long your labours for the conversion of the Jews will be wholly in vain. Why do not Mahommedans listen to the message of your missionaries? However defective and errone-

ous their faith may be in other respects, they are not idolaters, but worshippers of the God of heaven and earth. They do not reject Moses and the prophets, or consider Jesus an imposter. It is partly because you present for their acceptance a doctrine which contradicts the fundamental article of their belief, "God is one." And never, while the human mind is governed by rational evidence, will they surrender this immovable foundation of all true religion for what they consider a human invention. The same may be said of a great portion of the heathen world. The Hindoo can prove as clearly that his thirty millions of deities are but one God, as you can prove to him that your three persons or distinctions are but one Jehovah. But this is not the worst of the case. This doctrine is not only an insurmountable obstacle to the reception of the gospel by the Jews, heathen and Mohammedans, but it is also instrumental in driving many, who have been born and educated in christian lands, to open infidelity; and it likewise causes divisions and contentions of a very disastrous nature among professed disciples of Jesus. Could you bring to mind all the evils which it has occasioned in the church, all the wars it has fomented, all the blood it has spilled, you would shudder at the remembrance. And during all this warfare, no one pretends that he can find the doctrine laid down in any one passage of the whole Bible; no one pretends that he can give to it an intelligible explanation; no one pretends even that he can understand any thing concerning its true meaning. Truly, no one can doubt its injurious tendency, whether it be considered true or false. Let me entreat you to look attentively at this objection.

Thus you have the six reasons I spoke of for rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity. Until you have fully removed these I need not advance others of a similar character. Now I cannot believe either without evidence or contrary to convincing testimony; and, until you furnish a complete refutation of these arguments, I cannot receive this article of your human formulary of faith.

You will now ask, if those great and wise and good Christians, who receive the doctrine of the Trinity, have no scriptural evidence on which to rest their faith in this doctrine? They can produce but three passages from the whole Bible which have any direct bearing on the question. The texts which they adduce to prove that Christ is God and that the holy Spirit is God, even if the Trinitarian exposition of them

be correct, are, at best, only indirect evidence, and make the doctrine of the Trinity wholly a doctrine of mere inference. The only direct scriptural evidence which is claimed for this doctrine is contained in three single texts. Three single verses are all that have been or can be adduced as affording any express plausible evidence of three persons or distinctions in the divine nature. These I now proceed to examine. The others to which I have alluded will be considered in a subsequent number.

You find the following words in the first epistle of John. "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the holy Ghost; and these three are one." Perhaps it is not known to every person that this passage constitutes no part of the Bible. It was never written by the Beloved Disciple. It was put into his letter many years after his death. This is the belief of the learned of all denominations. I shall, therefore, merely refer you to the writings of some of the greatest divines of several of the most prominent sects in Christendom. Are you a Methodist? Go to the Commentary of Dr. Adam Clarke, and you may find the following sentences: — "It is likely this verse is not genuine. It is wanting in every manuscript of this epistle written *before* the invention of printing, one excepted; the others which omit this verse amount to one hundred and twelve." Are you an Episcopalian? Listen to the following from bishop Lowth: — "We have some wranglers in theology, sworn to follow their master, who are prepared to defend anything, however absurd, should there be occasion. But I believe there is no one among us, in the least degree conversant with sacred criticism, and having the use of his understanding, who would be willing to contend for the genuineness of this verse." Are you a Presbyterian? Hear the declaration of one of the most distinguished ministers of your denomination in England: — "We are unspeakably ashamed that any modern divine should have fought for the retention of a passage so indisputably spurious." Are you an Orthodox Congregationalist? Read the following confession of Professor Stuart, in the tenth number of the Biblical Repository: — "I have only to say, that there is an overwhelming mass of critical evidence against the genuineness of it, as the state of the matter now is." I could fill many pages with similar quotations were it necessary. The state of the case, then, is precisely this: every Trinitarian, who has given this subject a *thorough* investigation, rejects this verse,

as being no part of the Scriptures. When, therefore, you hear a minister quote it in preaching or conversation, you may be sure that he has not examined the question for himself, and that he is determined not to be governed by the testimony of the learned of his own denomination. You may be equally certain that no man will be willing to risk his reputation for learning and honesty, by quoting this passage, as a part of the Bible, in controversy with a Unitarian. — 1 John v. 7.

In an epistle of Paul you find the following text, which is quoted to prove the doctrine of the Trinity: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the holy Ghost, be with you all." Now what does this passage prove? Examine it carefully. Does it teach that there are three persons or distinctions in the Godhead? Does it imply that the Father, Son, and Spirit are one God, the same in substance, and equal in power and glory? Nothing of the kind is either taught or implied; and, to my mind, a stronger text against the Trinity need not be adduced. Let us dissect it. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ." Here is one person distinctly mentioned. Is he called God? Is he pronounced to be one person in the Trinity? Neither. He is called by a distinguished name, and what does this name mean? Who is the Lord Jesus Christ? This question is answered repeatedly in other parts of Scripture. He is the *Son* of that God, who gave him existence as the first-born of every creature, who imparted to him his Spirit without measure, made him both Lord and Christ, called him by a name which is above every name, and raised him from the dead after his crucifixion. Take the second clause of the sentence. "The love of God." What is the meaning of the word *God?* Does it mean the whole of Deity, or only one of the three persons in the Godhead? If you admit that it means, in this place, as it does in other places, *the whole* of God, then this verse destroys at once your doctrine. If you say that it means one third of God or one of the divine persons or distinctions, you must prove the truth of your assertion; and until you have established this position, you gain no assistance from this quotation. I make bold to declare that this essential requisite has never been proved, and never can be; and, consequently, that the word *God*, in this connexion, means the God and Father of Jesus, our heavenly Father, and the only true God. Take now the last clause. "The communion of

the holy Ghost." And what does this mean? It is a prayer that the converts might participate in the gifts, powers, and influences of the divine Spirit. Now can you commune *with* these? No. The communion *of* these is rational. If a *person* was here meant, it would be *with* instead of the preposition *of*. And, to my mind, this circumstance renders it impossible that a third *person* of the Godhead can have been intended by the phrase *holy Spirit*. This verse, then, neither teaches nor implies the doctrine of the Trinity; but, on the contrary, furnishes an unanswerable objection to the doctrine. 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

In the gospel of Matthew you find this command of our Saviour:—"Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost." Does this verse teach or imply the doctrine of the Trinity? Does it assert that there are three persons in the Godhead? Does it declare that the Father, Son, and Spirit are one God; the same in substance and equal in power and glory? Surely, neither. Look carefully for yourselves. To my mind, this text, with the accompanying explanations, presents an insurmountable objection to the doctrine in question. Notice a few of the facts in the case. In the very sentence preceding, Jesus uses these remarkable words:—"All power *is given* unto me in heaven and in earth." Now if power was *given* him, there must be a Being above him who had this gift to bestow; for none can give to the Almighty; and consequently, Jesus was not the very God. It appears to me that he took particular pains to declare his dependence on his God and Father for all his power, so that no one might imagine that he was any part of God, simply because his name was associated with that of the Father in the formula of baptism. And how did the apostles understand this injunction? How did they obey this command? Did they baptize their converts into a belief of three equal persons in one God? Nothing of the kind. Read the history of their ministry for nearly thirty years. They never once used these words in the performance of this rite. They baptized into "the name of the Lord Jesus." And how do you account for this practice? I find no difficulty whatever in answering this question. Their first converts were from the Jewish nation, who already believed in one Father, and in his holy Spirit by which he wrought miracles. They now professed their belief in the true Messiah, and in his divine mission which was confirmed by the mirac-

ulous agency of Deity. And in this sense we now administer this ordinance. I say to the parent who presents his children at the baptismal font, "By this act you engage to educate your child in a knowledge of the one true God, the universal Father; in a knowledge of Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of the Most High, the Saviour of the world; in a knowledge of those miracles which God wrought in confirmation of the divine mission of Jesus, and in all the truths of his well authenticated religion." I conclude, therefore, by saying, that this verse affords no direct evidence of the Trinity; and, when properly understood, is one of the strongest proofs against the doctrine. This is my serious and solemn conviction; but you must judge for yourselves. Matthew, xxviii. 18, 19.

These are all the passages which any divine of respectability would quote in defence of the Trinity. I know that several other texts are sometimes mentioned by the young and inexperienced. I will quote one, and show you that no better evidence is wanted to destroy the doctrine. "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the holy Ghost." Now suppose I give a Trinitarian meaning to this sentence. I must alter it, thus: By the word God is meant the Father, the first person in the Trinity. This first person anointed Jesus, the second person, a being of the same substance with himself, and equal in power and glory. The first person anointed the second person with the holy Spirit, the third person in the Trinity, of the same substance of the other two, and equal in power and glory. Now I certainly intend no ridicule. If this explanation appear like a burlesque, you must blame the person who quoted the verse to prove the Trinity, and not my exposition. — See others of a similar character, in "Remarks on the Unitarian Belief, by Nehemiah Adams," pp. 79, 80.

Thus, christian brethren, have I given the subject of the Trinity as full a discussion as my present limits permit. I have stated some of the reasons why I reject this doctrine. In my next, I shall give the arguments for my belief in the simple unity of God.

B. Whitman.

Christianity and Reform.

Thousands assure us that we live in a wonder-working age, and refer us for proof to man's conquests over the material world. We are told that man has attacked the elements and subdued them, — made the most hurtful comparatively harmless, and the most stubborn ministers to his wants or his pleasures.

But man's moral conquests are far more striking proofs of his power, and are infinitely more encouraging to the philanthropist. Moral events, which are to influence all coming generations, have succeeded, and are succeeding, each other with astonishing rapidity. It would seem that, in these latter days, a new spirit had been breathed into the moral world. Mind breaks its long slumber and begins to exert its energies. Men begin to feel the workings of a nobler nature, and to indulge, and labour to embody, visions of a higher and lovelier destiny for the human race.

A war rages — a war of opinion — between the past and the future, between the advocates of the old order of things, and those who demand new and better institutions for time to come. It extends to every thing. Nothing is too sacred to be attacked. Nothing in politics, in morals, or in religion, is too venerable for its age, too well established by experience, to escape the hand of the ruthless soldier of the *movement* party in this new and fearful war. Blows are struck at the very foundation of the existing social order, and the ruins of all once held sacred are exposed to the idle gaze of the multitude.

All over the world the war has commenced. All over the world the demand for reform is uttered ; in some places, in sounds half suppressed and scarcely audible ; but in others, in tones loud, determined, and startling. In all communities there is a deep feeling, there are full hearts, there are quickened spirits, that will dare improvements in man's moral and social condition, with the hero's courage, with the saint's singleness of purpose, and with the martyr's firmness. The millions awake. They begin to perceive, or imagine they perceive, that they have been trifled with, that they have tamely submitted to an order of things which a little well directed exertion on their part would have exchanged for one immeasurably better. Urged on by a sense of real

or fancied wrongs, they are collecting their forces and nerving their souls to the battle.

Such is the rising spirit of the times. We may deny or seek to disguise it, but proofs meet the eye at every glance. We may denounce it, declaim or reason against it, call it dangerous, impious, blasphemous, or what we will; its course is onward, and no power on earth can stay its progress or scatter its gathering forces. It may pass over the earth with desolation and death, may sweep off everything well established in government, pure in morals, or venerable in religion, but it must and will have its course. Of this we may be assured, great and lasting changes will be effected. The day has gone by to prevent it. The work is too far advanced to be arrested. Will the changes to be introduced settle down into salutary reforms, or will they prove only mischievous innovations? This is no trifling question. The wise and the good ask it with solicitude, if not with alarm. What answer shall be returned?

It may be answered, that the results of the impending struggle will be good or bad, according to the alliances which may be formed. If the spirit at work ally itself to infidelity, nothing valuable will be gained; if to religion, the most satisfactory consequences may be predicted. This article will therefore labour to prove that no salutary reform can be effected by infidelity, and that the spirit of reform is, in fact, the very spirit of the gospel.

Those who are acquainted with man's whole nature require no proof of the first position here assumed. But these are not many. Enough has been witnessed, for a few years past, in our own country as well as in other countries, to convince us that those are not wanting who think they must commence reformers by making war upon the church, declaiming against the clergy, and breaking men loose from the restraints of religion. When the French reformer undertook to remodel society and to base his government on 'the rights of man,' he judged it necessary to reject religion. In England, at the present moment, many of the publications addressed to the labouring classes, publications which are the boldest and most popular advocates of reform, are either avowedly infidel, or else, under the pretence of opposing the Church Establishment, use arguments which strike at the foundation of religion itself. In our own country, within a few years, we have seen start up a large number of publications professedly advocating a radical reform in the social institutions of all coun-

tries, and, without a single exception, all have openly or covertly, attacked religion. Almost every young man, who learns, for the first time, that all, which is, is not right, charges the wrong he thinks he has discovered to the clergy, and believes himself aiding a reform by opposing them, and, too often, the cause they were set apart to defend. It is true, that he is soon cured of this folly, but seldom without the loss of those generous feelings by which he was governed. These are facts not without meaning. They admonish us that it is no work of supererogation to prove that infidelity can effect no real reform.

To effect any real reform, the individual man must be improved. The mass of mankind is made up of individuals. There is no such thing as reforming the mass without reforming the individuals who compose it. The mass of mankind is often spoken of as if it were a real individual; but in itself it is nothing. It has no head, no heart, no soul, no character, but as these exist in its individual members. Each member of the great whole has a separate existence, will, powers, duties of his own, and which cannot be merged in the mass. The reformer's concern is with the individual. That which gives to the individual a free mind, a pure heart, and full scope for just and beneficial action, is that which will reform the many. When the majority of any community are fitted for better institutions, for a more advanced state of society, that state will be introduced and those institutions will be secured. What the reformer, then, wants is the power to elevate the individual, to quicken in his soul the love of the highest excellence, and to urge him forward towards perfection with new and stronger impulses.

Will infidelity supply this power? Does infidelity seek to reform individual character? It is folly to pretend that it does. It attacks institutions. It deals only with some of the forms under which the errors of individual character may have been manifested, while it leaves the errors themselves untouched. It pronounces religion false, and its action on man's social relations mischievous. It declaims against government, but it does not propose a remedy for those depravities of individual character which render government necessary. Viewed in the most favourable light, it is powerless. Separated from what it often borrows from religion, it can present no motive to action. It has no power to kindle up a moral energy in the soul, and to arm it for a long and vigorous struggle for lofty and abiding virtue. The highest stand-

ard of morality it can recognise is expediency, and expediency for this short and transitory life.

Till within a few years, the unbeliever dreamed of no social reform, advocated no moral progress, imagined nothing better for man than the long train of existing abuses, unless, indeed, it were, that he should go back to the condition of the "untutored savage." What visions of a higher and better social existence than that they found already sustained, ever flitted across the minds of such men as Hobbes, Mandeville, Hume and Gibbon? What inward thirst, what promptings of the soul, had they for a purer virtue, a greater amount of human happiness — they, who seem to have had not the least sympathy with their fellow-beings? Indeed, what inducement can he who believes merely that he is to-day, and tomorrow will not be, — what inducement can he have to struggle with "the powers that be," to risk ease, property, reputation, perhaps life, to benefit those of whom he knows nothing, for whom he cares nothing, and who, like him, are only for a day, destined to flourish in the morning, to wither at noon, and to die ere it is night? Indeed, after the novelty of his disbelief has worn off, the unbeliever seldom troubles himself much about anything except his own immediate interests. He wraps himself up in his selfishness, looks in scorn upon the world, and bids it take care of itself. You often find him the loudest and most inveterate opponent of all useful changes. Where religion is popular, you may not unfrequently see him in the garb of the church, consoling himself for his hypocrisy by saying, Every man is selfish, following only his own selfish purposes, and that he must take the same course in self-defence. Long would reform sleep undisturbed, were it entrusted to the care of such as he!

It is true that infidelity, in these days, pretends to be a reformer. It speaks much of the debasement of the human mind, of the degradation of human nature, and makes loud and frequent demands for improvement; but, usually, without any clear conceptions of what would be an improvement, without any knowledge of what lies at the bottom of existing abuses, of man's wants and capabilities, or of what would supply the one or fully develope the other. One attributes all the wrong which exists to a mischievous government, another to the malign influence of certain indefinable, constantly varying external circumstances, another to the prevalence of religious belief, another to the priesthood, even where no priesthood exists, and so on to the end of the chapter. But in all their

speculations, the idea of improving the individual man, as the means of improving the body of which he is a member, seems never to have come across the minds of unbelievers. They demand radical changes, but seem to have no suspicion that there can be no radical changes in society, or if there can, that none are desirable, any farther than they may be rendered necessary by radical changes in individual character. In France, the unbeliever, for a time, had an open field and fair play. He began by overturning the whole fabric of society, and then reörganized it according to his own mind. As he had modelled his new institutions after the principles of his ideal perfection, he was surprised to find that they did not produce the results he had predicted. It did not, at first, occur to him, that his new institutions and the character of the individuals for whom he had provided them were not in harmony; and when he did learn this, he believed the shortest way to remove the discrepancy was to destroy nearly all the then existing generation. Hence, his reform became a reign of terror, and his efforts in behalf of free institutions have retarded the march of liberty for centuries. All this evil would have been avoided, had he perceived that his work should begin with the individual, that he should first raise the individual and develope the powers of the individual mind. Had he done this, he would have elevated the standard of morality, and produced a discrepancy between individual character and — not his new institutions — but the old, and this would have inevitably involved their destruction, and have necessarily introduced new ones, as perfect as the new standard of individual excellence would admit. The notion, that government and social institutions can produce and preserve any given description of individual character, would never have been entertained, and tyrants would not have been furnished with another plea for despotism, to save society from the horrors of anarchy.

In this country, we established a free government, not because we had reasoned ourselves into a belief of its superiority to all others, not because we believed it would produce and preserve the virtues of individual character, but because such were already the virtues and the intelligence of our citizens as individuals, that none other than a free government would have been in harmony with their character. That even a free government and comparatively perfect social institutions do not necessarily preserve a corresponding excellence in individual character, is obvious from what we are daily wit-

nessing among ourselves. Our people, as individuals, in the high uncompromising moral virtues, are very little, if at all, in advance of what they were at the commencement of our glorious struggle for freedom and national independence. We have thus far depended too much upon a free government and enlightened institutions, and have vainly thought to legislate people into high-toned moral beings. The better informed among us are daily perceiving the necessity of paying more and more attention to the culture of the individual mind. They are daily becoming better and better convinced that the only way to set the mass of our citizens forward in the career of virtuous improvement, is, to develope the capabilities of the individual man; to induce him to employ all his faculties in the accomplishment of just ends, and to exert all his energies to the perfecting of his own mind and heart.

Nothing, it should be added, will reform the individual, that does not appeal to his whole nature, and give full employment to all, especially his higher faculties. This infidelity cannot do. It addresses us as animals, not as men. It has no concern with the soul. It recognises no spirit in man, and, consequently, can appeal only to the body, to bodily appetites and bodily powers. It can give us no high and stirring views of our nature, no inducement to pure and elevated virtue, by assuring us that we are related to a Being who is infinitely great and supremely good, that we are kindred spirits and may attain to a kindred excellence with the everlasting God. In one word, it can make no appeal to the religious sentiment, can furnish nothing on which the religious affections can lay hold, and from which they may derive purity, strength, and delight. In this it leaves out a part, and that the noblest part, of our nature.

It is not necessary to prove that the religious sentiment is a part of our nature. We see this, we feel and know it. All ages, all countries, and nearly all individuals have the sentiment, and manifest it in combination with some form of religion. True, some few of our race have not always felt the inward workings of the religious sentiment, but to infer from this, that it is not natural to man, would be as absurd as to pretend that hunger and thirst are not natural, because, in certain morbid states of the stomach, there is felt no appetite for food or drink. Take away God and religion from the soul, its moral life dies, as quickly as does the body when deprived of wholesome nutriment. The soul hungers and thirsts for religion. Religion is its meat and drink; its bread

of life; and is as strongly craved, as much needed for its growth and healthy action, as is food or drink for the body. How, then, can we hope to find the individual man morally strong and healthy, when deprived of this nutriment of the soul? Without this he must inevitably pine away, wither into a mere animal, to vegetate, propagate its species, and die. Yet of this would infidelity deprive us, and to this wretched fate would it abandon us.

No change, which does not tend to give free and full scope for the just exercise of all our faculties, can be a real reform. The only error of the present state of things is, that it infringes right action, supplies motives to wrong, and prevents the full development of the individual mind. What we want, are such changes, such improvements, as will develope, employ, task to their fullest extent, and rightly direct, all the faculties of our common nature. But such, infidelity cannot effect. Denying the religious sentiment, it can assign no place for its developement; discarding all the pious affections, it can afford them no employment in its new-modelled society, and shape nothing to their wants; contemplating only the human animal, it can make provision only for animal wants; and having no use for the spiritual nature, it must do all it can to break and destroy its power. Let any man ascertain accurately how large a portion of his nature finds employment only in that which belongs to religion, or is in some way dependant on the religious sentiment, and he may easily satisfy himself, whether infidelity would be likely to reörganize society, so as to give full scope for the free, vigorous and healthy exercise of our whole nature.

Now as infidelity does not propose to do this, has never done it, and never can do it, it can produce no salutary reform. The institutions it would introduce would always be opposed to the developement of much of our nature, and to individual improvement; consequently, they would be mischievous. They would place the social and the individual man in a state of perpetual war; the spiritual and the animal nature in an eternal struggle. The bosom would be torn by contending factions; government would be one thing to-day, and another to-morrow, and nothing would be fixed but anarchy and confusion.

That infidelity and the spirit of reform have sometimes been found in alliance, is not denied; but this alliance is unnatural, and has never produced anything worth preserving. Reformers have sometimes erred. Animated by a strong

desire for human improvement, feeling an undying love for man, they have freely devoted themselves to his emancipation, and to the promotion of his endless progress towards perfection; but they have not always had clear conceptions of what would be an improvement, of the good attainable, nor of the practicable means of attaining it. Their zeal may have flowed from pure hearts, but it has not always been guided by just knowledge. They have often excited needless alarm, waged needless war, declaimed when they should have reasoned, censured when they should have pitied and consoled, awakened resentment when they should have gained confidence and attracted love. The consequence is, that they have been opposed by their natural friends, and this has obliged them to league with their natural enemies.

In the contest, the reformer has excited the alarms of the religious and armed against himself the guardians of the faith. He has met the minister of the church commanding him in the name of God to desist, and assuring him, that if he take another step forward, he does it at the peril of his soul's salvation. When the French reformer rose against the mischievous remains of the feudal system and the severe exactions of a superannuated tyranny, he found the church leagued with the abuses he would correct. Those who lived upon her revenues bade him retire. The anathema met his advance and repelled his attacks; and he was induced to believe there was no place whereon to erect the palace of liberty and social order, but the ruins of the temple.

Yet his cause was most eminently a religious cause. It was not that the spirit of reform was an infidel spirit, that it was opposed by the professed friends of religion. All reforms come from the lower classes, who are always the sufferers; and they are usually opposed by the higher classes, who live by those very abuses, or who are the higher classes in consequence of those very abuses which the reformer would redress. These classes, whether hereditary, elective, or fortuitous, — whether composed of the same individuals or of different ones, — have always the same spirit, and the same interests. The old order of things is that which elevates them; and that order of things they, of course, must feel it their interest to maintain. Hence it is, that the upper classes of society, all who are under the direct influence of those classes, and all who hope one day to make a part of them, are almost always opposed to all radical changes, and consequently to all real reform. In most countries, the ministers of

religion, especially the higher orders of the hierarchy, make up a part of the higher and privileged classes, and hence the reason why they oppose the reformer, and force him into the ranks of the unbeliever. They, from their position, feel no need of a reform in the moral and social institutions of the community, and hope nothing from a change; and, as they are supposed to be like other men, they can but oppose it; they always have done so, and they always will do so, till they are made sensible that they must lose all their influence, and their means of benefiting themselves or others by continuing their opposition.

It is because the ministers of religion have, in most countries and in most ages of the world, formed one of the higher classes, or constituted one of the privileged orders, that we have so uniformly found them, in past times at least, advocates of the stationary principle. Where a man's treasure is, there will be his heart; and they had their treasure, they always have their treasure, in the existing order of things. This were no subject of complaint, were the existing order always the best order; were not progress a law of our nature and an inevitable condition of human society; were we able at any given time to reach the perfect, instead of being destined to be eternally approaching it. But such is not the fact. Man's course is onward. No state of society is perfect. No form of religion has ever yet been extensively embraced but it had its imperfections. Christianity has been everywhere presented under forms which ever have been and ever will be opposed, as mind advances and there is felt the want of something more liberal and more refined. Admit that the spirit of Christianity is always the same, yet its forms may be changed to suit the changes of individuals and of societies, and were this done no difficulty would occur. But its ministers and its professed friends declare religion to be identified with forms which have become revolting, and thus the reformer is driven from their company to that of the infidel.

It is never religion itself that the reformer opposes. He finds the gospel adulterated; he finds a foul and unnatural mixture presented him in the place of pure religion, and it is always those parts which are foreign to religion, but which are presented with it, that excite his hostility. Yet, in opposing the mixture, he may sometimes, innocently, because unintentionally, oppose the pure; in attacking the abuse, he may sometimes inadvertently strike the thing abused; in warring against the wrong-headed advocate, he may war

against religion itself. He may not always clearly discriminate in his own mind; and if he should not, he is not more guilty than thousands who pass for good Christians. And should he make the proper distinctions in his own mind, he may fail to make others perceive them; for the vast majority of mankind identify religion with the abuses he would correct; and we need not, perhaps, be either surprised or angry, if, in his zeal for reform, wearied with effort after effort, opposed on every hand, and persecuted by the servants of the temple, he come to the conclusion, that it is best to cut the knot, and reject religion entirely. Men have so done, they may continue to do so, but no genuine friend to man ever did or ever will come to this conclusion, till driven to it by the professed guardians of the faith, "who neither enter into the kingdom of heaven themselves, nor suffer those that would to enter."

This should induce no Christian to decry reform. It should rather lead him to inquire, if he be not supporting religion under a form which is opposed to the progress of mind. The "overflowing scourge," which will sweep off "every refuge of lies," is now passing over the earth, and well doth it import us to surrender voluntarily whatever we love that is not based on eternal truth, that is not absolutely essential to the existence and free and healthy action of the religious sentiment. Well doth it import us all to return to the simplicity of the gospel, and to refuse, henceforth, to defend religion under any form not consistent with the endless progress of human reason and the ever advancing state of human society.

The consideration of my second position, namely, that the spirit of reform is in fact the very spirit of religion, is reserved for another number; as more room has been already occupied than was intended.

O. A. Brownson.

NOTICES OF BOOKS.

THE BOOK OF MORMON.

An Account, written by the Hand of Mormon upon Plates, taken from the Plates of Nephi. By Joseph Smith, Jr., Author and Proprietor.

This is the title of the volume which contains the collection of writings held sacred by the Mormonites; in other words, it is the title of the Mormon Bible. The Mormonites, as they are commonly called, or, as they call themselves, the members of the true church of Christ, — as our readers are probably aware, are a new denomination of religionists. It is but a few years since they made their appearance in the western part of the state of New York. They have already met with some success in the spread of their opinions; and preachers of this denomination are now scattering themselves abroad over the land, labouring with much zeal to gain proselytes to their faith. The account which has been given of the origin of their sacred writings is, briefly, this: — Joseph Smith, Jr., whose name appears on the title-page as author and proprietor of the work, was directed by the Spirit of God to dig, in a hill in the "township of Manchester, Ontario county, N. Y.," for certain golden plates, which were there concealed, and upon which were inscribed sacred records. He obeyed the direction and found the plates. The inscriptions upon them were in an unknown tongue. But, by the special power of the Spirit, Smith was enabled to translate them. This translation is the volume, the title of which is placed at the head of this article. To confirm the truth of this account, the volume contains two certificates, one of which is signed by three, and the other by eight witnesses. The three witnesses testify, "That an Angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes, that we beheld and saw the plates and the engravings thereon." The eight witnesses testify, "We have seen and hefted, and know of a surety that the said Smith has got the plates of which we have spoken, — and we also saw the engravings thereon, all of which has the appearance of ancient work and of curious workmanship."

The volume contains a collection of writings, or, as they are called, of different Books, purporting to have been written at different times, and by the different authors whose names they respectively bear. The following are the names of the different Books, in the order in which they occur.

1. First Book of Nephi.
2. Second Book of Nephi.
3. Book of Jacob, brother of Nephi.
4. Book of Enos, son of Jacob.
5. Book of Jarom, son of Enos.
6. Book of Omni, son of Jarom.
7. Words of Mormon.
8. Book of Mosiah.
9. Book of Alma.
10. Book of Helaman.
11. Book of Nephi, son of Nephi, son of Helaman.
12. Book of Nephi, son of Nephi, one of the disciples of Christ.
13. Book of Mormon.
14. Book of Ether.
15. Book of Moroni.

We shall not undertake to give a particular analysis of each of these Books. We shall give only a brief outline of the contents of the whole. The volume is composed of what purport to be, historical records, prophetical declarations, and direct exhortatory addresses. The following is a brief sketch of what purport to be the historical records of the volume.

One Lehi, a devout and holy man, was moved by the threatenings of Jeremiah and other prophets who foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, to flee from that devoted city. He left in the first year of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah. From Jerusalem he went forth into the wilderness. After having travelled for three days, he pitched his tent in a valley, by the side of a river which emptied into the Red Sea. Lehi left behind, in Jerusalem, as he went forth, all his riches, and took with him only his family, which consisted of his wife Sarai and four sons, Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and Nephi. After he had pitched his tent, he sent his sons back to Jerusalem, to obtain the plates which contained the genealogical records of his family, that the remembrance of their origin might be preserved among his descendants. His sons succeeded in obtaining the plates, from which it appeared that Lehi was a descendant of Joseph, the son of Jacob, who was sold into Egypt. Again, Lehi sent his sons back to Jerusalem to seek out for themselves wives, who might go forth with them wherever the Lord should direct. The sons persuade one Ishmael to unite himself unto them, and to go forth into the wilderness, with his family, which consisted of daughters. The whole company now journey along the coast of the Red Sea for some days, and then strike off and journey in a direction due east, until they come to the great waters. Here, Nephi was directed of the Lord to construct a vessel; and being assisted by the Spirit, he at length succeeded, notwithstanding his elder brothers laughed him to scorn for his attempt. The vessel is completed, and the whole company now

launch forth upon "the mighty deep." It is impossible to ascertain, precisely, from what place they sailed; and, as the direction and length of their voyage are not particularly mentioned, we lose all further geographical traces of them. During the voyage, the elder brothers, Laman and Lemuel, refuse to submit to their younger brother, Nephi. They rise in mutiny, seize Nephi, bind him hand and foot, and beat him with rods. While Nephi lay bound, a tempest arose, and they were driven from their proper course. As Nephi was the only one that had been instructed of the Lord in regard to the management of the vessel, the elder brothers, through fear, released him and restored him to the command. They at length arrive at a land unknown to the rest of the world. After their arrival, Laman and Lemuel revolted from the command of Nephi. This laid the foundation for two general divisions, called Lamanites and Nephites. These names came, however, in the course of time, to denote distinctions of character, rather than difference of family descent. Those, who disbelieved and disobeyed, were classed with the Lamanites, while the believing and the obedient were ranked with the Nephites. These two general divisions were each divided into various subordinate tribes. They scattered themselves over the land, cultivated the earth, built cities and towns. They enjoyed prosperity or experienced adversity, as the people were obedient or disobedient. There were frequent wars between the Lamanites and Nephites, and victory sided sometimes with one party and sometimes with the other. The history is more directly that of the Nephites, and it is only incidentally that we are made acquainted with the affairs of the Lamanites. The Nephites were sometimes governed by kings and sometimes by judges. After the ascension of our Saviour, as recorded in the New Testament, he is represented to have appeared to the Nephites. While among them, he healed the diseased, and gave religious instruction. The religious instruction, which he gave, accords well with what is recorded of his discourses in the New Testament, since it is but a copy, almost word for word, from those discourses. After our Saviour had ascended from the Nephites, his gospel was preached and spread rapidly among the Nephites and among a part of the Lamanites. But, at length, the Nephites "dwindled in unbelief;" the infidel portion of the inhabitants gained the ascendency, the true believers became extinct, and the plates, which contained the records of the nation, were "hid up unto the Lord in the earth, to be brought forth in due time by the hand of the Gentile."

Such is a brief sketch of the historical records contained in the Book of Mormon. In all this history, there is but one allusion which affords us an intelligible hint in regard to the geography of the land, in which the Nephites and Lamanites dwelt.

There is, incidentally, mention made of a narrow neck of land, which connects the North country with the South, which, we suppose, means the Isthmus of Darien. The preachers of this faith, we understand, endeavour to prove the truth of the history by a reference to the face of the country. They suppose the mounds throughout the western states, which have heretofore excited so much curiosity, are the remains of the cities of the Nephites and Lamanites.

The prophetical declarations of the Book of Mormon relate to the prosperity and adversity of the people to whom they are addressed, to the coming of Christ, and to "the hiding up of the plates and their being brought forth by the hand of the Gentile;" together with denunciations of woe upon all, who, at the time the plates may be brought forth, shall object to "more Bible" and shall contend that miracles have ceased. The prophecies which relate to the prosperity and adversity of the people, are, many of them, clothed in the language of the Jewish prophets; or, in other words, are composed of expressions taken from the prophetical writings of the Old Testament. In one instance, the Prophet, instead of making new disclosures, professes simply to read to the people from the prophecy of Isaiah, and, consequently, we have several chapters of that Book, copied almost word for word. The prophecies in regard to the coming of Christ and his precursor, John the Baptist, are more definite than the prophecies of the Old Testament, being clothed, for the most part, in the language of the New Testament, or in the language of modern theology. We find the following prophecy in regard to John the Baptist: —

"And he spake also concerning a prophet, which should come before the Messiah to prepare the way of the Lord; yea, even he should go forth and cry in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord and make his paths straight; for there standeth one among you whom ye know not, and he is mightier than I, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. And much spake my father concerning this thing. And my Father saith, that he should baptize in Bethabara, beyond Jordan; and he also spake that he should baptize with water, yea, even that he should baptize the Messiah with water. And after that he had baptized the Messiah with water, he should behold and bear record, that he had baptized the Lamb of God, which should take away the sins of the world."

We find the following prophetical vision of the times of the Saviour: —

"And it came to pass, that the angel spake unto me again, saying, Look! And I looked, and beheld the Lamb of God, that he was taken by the people, yea, the Everlasting God was judged of the world. And I, Nephi, saw that he was lifted up upon the cross and slain for the sins of the world."

We find the following prophetical declarations, which have reference, we presume, to the present times: —

"And because my words shall hiss forth, many of the Gentiles shall say, A Bible, a Bible; we have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible. . . . . Wherefore, because that ye have a Bible, ye need not suppose that it contains all my words, neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written."

From these quotations our readers may gain some idea of the character of the prophecies contained in the Book of Mormon.

In regard to the exhortations, there is one singular circumstance. We should naturally suppose, that, coming, as Lehi and his family are represented to have done, from Jerusalem, there would be some traces of Jewish manners and customs among the people. But we are disappointed. Nephi did, indeed, build a temple, after the manner of Solomon's temple. But we see no account of sacrifices and of national festivals, and but an allusion to synagogues. No. The moment they are established in their new land, we read of the church, of preaching, according to the modern style of preaching, of converts, dissenters, and of baptism. The exhortations are strongly tinctured with the doctrines of modern Orthodoxy. Those given before are nearly the same with those given after the Saviour's appearance. In the one case, the people were exhorted to believe that a Saviour would come and that an atonement would be made; in the other, that a Saviour had come and that an atonement had been made. We find the following account of an interview between Aaron, one of the preachers, and the king, which may serve as a specimen of the exhortations. This interview took place, we would observe, before the appearance of our Saviour.

"And it came to pass, that when Aaron saw that the King would believe his words, he began from the creation of Adam, reading the Scriptures, unto the king; how God created man after his own image, and that God gave him commandments, and that, because of transgression, man had fallen. And Aaron did expound unto him the Scriptures, from the creation of Adam, laying the fall of man before him, and their carnal state, and also the plan of redemption, which was prepared from the foundation of the world, through Christ, for all, whosoever would believe on his name. And, since man had fallen, he could not merit any thing of himself, but the sufferings and death of Christ atoneth for their sins through faith and repentance."

We have thus given a brief sketch of the contents of the whole book. — In regard to the style in which the book is written, we have but little to say. There is an attempt to imitate the style of the sacred Scriptures. But the attempt is unsuccessful. Some of the more obvious peculiarities of scripture-language are indeed exhibited. Nearly two thirds of the paragraphs are introduced with the phrase, "And it came to pass."

In endeavouring to preserve the solemn style of the Scriptures, there is a total disregard of grammatical propriety. We read, "The Lord sayeth unto me, and I *sayeth* unto the Lord." But perhaps a few extracts, selected at random, will give our readers a more correct idea of the general style of the book, than any remarks we might offer.

"And it came to pass that when they had *arriven* in the borders of the land of the Lamanites."

"And it came to pass that I Nephi did make *bellowses* wherewith to blow the fire."

"And it came to pass that Limhi and many of his people *was* desirous to be baptized."

We might fill our pages with quotations like these. We will, however, bring forward but one or two more. On page 182, we find Abinadi, a true prophet of the Lord, breaking forth into sublime strains of holy indignation against the false prophets, who had caused the people to pervert the ways of the Lord. The following is the passage: —

"And now Abinadi saith unto them, 'Are you priests, and pretend to teach this people, and to understand the spirit of prophesying, and yet desireth to know of me, what these things mean? I say unto, Wo be unto you for perverting the ways of the Lord. For if ye understand these things, ye have not taught them, therefore ye have perverted the ways of the Lord. Ye have not applied your hearts to understanding, therefore ye have not been wise. Therefore what teachest thou this people? And they said, we teach the law of Moses. And again he saith unto them, if ye teach the law of Moses, why do ye not keep it? Why do ye set your hearts upon riches? Why do ye spend your strength upon harlots, yea, and cause this people to commit sin, that the Lord hath cause to send me, to prophesy against this people, yea, even a great evil against this people? Knowest thou not that I speak the truth? Yea, thou knowest that I speak the truth; and you had ought to tremble before God."

On page 515, we learn what to expect during the period of the much-talked-of Millenium. For we find a description of the state of society among the Nephites, at a time when the influence of religion was universally felt. At that time, we are told, "there were no robbers, nor no murderers, neither were there Lamanites, nor no manner of Ites."— But we have satisfied our readers, we trust, with specimens of the style of the Book of Mormon. We will only add, that the different writers seem to have been all educated in the same school, since the same style is manifest in the writings of all.

That the Mormon faith has spread, with some degree of rapidity, since its first appearance, cannot be disputed. We are told, that there are already six hundred preachers of this faith, scattered abroad over the land. We have, therefore, in reading

the Book of Mormon, sought carefully for the peculiarities which are calculated to give it success, and we have also inquired as to the course pursued by the preachers in setting forth their views. There is some degree of plausibility, both in the course pursued by the preachers, and in the contents of the book itself. The course pursued by the preachers we understand is this. They state, what all admit to be facts, that, in the primitive ages of the church, there was among the disciples the power of speaking with tongues and of working miracles; that, at the present day, no denomination of Christians possesses this power. From these facts they draw the conclusion, that all denominations of Christians have departed from the true faith of the primitive church. They then claim for themselves and the members of their church the power of speaking with tongues and of working miracles. They jabber with some strange sounds, and call this the speaking with tongues. They assert it as a fact, that among them the dead have been raised and the sick healed. From these *facts*, as they call them, they draw the conclusion that *they* are the members of the true church of Christ. If you object to the historical accounts of their sacred books, they refer you to the mounds of the western country, as remains of ancient cities, and as proofs that this country was once inhabited by a race of people better acquainted with the arts of civilized life, than the present race of savages; and this, they contend, is satisfactory presumptive proof of the truth of the history. Do you ask, what reason there is to believe that our Saviour, after his ascension, appeared to the former inhabitants of America? They answer you in the words of their sacred books, in what purport to be the words of our Saviour himself while among the Nephites: —

"And verily I say unto you, that ye are they, of which I said, Other sheep I have which are not of this fold, them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd. And they understood me not, for they supposed it had been the Gentiles."

Now all this presents itself to the minds of the ignorant, as being plausible, as being forcible. They see not the sophistry. They know not what answer to give, and they are consequently carried away. In addition to all this, the preachers do not shock previously existing attachments, by rejecting the Bible. They profess to receive the whole Bible, just as it stands, and to regard it just as Christians generally regard it. They direct their hearers to search the Scriptures, and they themselves undertake to explain the declarations of the Old and New Testaments. They bring forward the Book of Mormon as another and more clear and distinct revelation, given to another branch of the descendants of Abraham, but as corresponding in its design and its general tenor with the sacred Scriptures.

And then, too, the book itself is with some art adapted to the known prejudices of a portion of the community. It is well known, that, among a portion of the community, there is a strong prejudice against the support, by the people, of a regular ministry. All such will find in the Book of Mormon, that, among the members of the true church, the preachers did not set themselves above the people, that they laboured with their own hands for the supply of their wants, that, when the period of religious worship arrived, the preachers, as well as the people, went from their labours to their devotions, and that, when this period had passed, the preachers, as well as the people, returned to their labours.

Again, it is well known, that, among some, there are complaints that officers of government should be supported in what they regard a life of ease and laziness, by salaries, drawn from the pockets of the hard-labouring people, in the form of taxes. All such will find in the Book of Mormon, that those rulers are spoken of as most acceptable in the sight of God, who laboured, working with their hands, for the supply of their wants, that so the people might not be burdened with taxes for their support; and, consequently, all such are led to hope, that, when the doctrines of the Book of Mormon, or the true faith of the primitive church, shall prevail, they shall be freed from taxes for the support of government.

Still further, it is well known that, in some minds, there is a prejudice against fine clothing, or even against decent apparel, as indicating pride in the wearer. Those, who are under the influence of this prejudice, find something in the Book of Mormon to suit their taste. They find that calamities were often brought upon the Nephites, through the pride of those who wore costly apparel. They find that, on one occasion, when the devout were blessed of the Lord with worldly prosperity, they had, among other things, great supplies of "homely clothing."

Finally, it is well known that, in many minds, there is a strong feeling of opposition to the institution of Masonry. All such find something in the Book of Mormon to meet their views. They find that, at a certain time,

"Satan did stir up the hearts of the more parts of the Nephites, insomuch that they did unite with those bands of robbers, and did enter into their covenants and their oaths, that they would protect and preserve one another, in whatever difficult circumstances they should be placed in, that they should not suffer for their murders and their plunderings and their stealings. And it came to pass, that they did have their signs, yea, their secret signs, and their secret words, and this, that they might distinguish a brother who had entered into the covenant, that, whatsoever wickedness his brother should do, he should not be injured by his brother, nor by those who did belong to his band who had taken this covenant; and whosoever of their band should reveal unto the world their

wickedness and their abominations, should be tried, not according to the laws of their country, but according to the laws of their wickedness, which had been given by Gadianton and Kishkumen. Now behold, those secret oaths and covenants did not come forth unto Gadianton from the records which were delivered unto Helaman; but behold, they were put into the heart of Gadianton by that same being who did entice our first parents to partake of the forbidden fruit."

Thus there are, in the book itself, artful adaptations to the known prejudices of the community. And, besides, there are circumstances, in the condition and views of those among whom this faith spreads, which are calculated to secure it success. In a large portion of the community, there is a great degree of ignorance in regard to the geography of the sacred Scriptures, the manners and customs of the Jews, and the natural history of the Bible. There are many, who read their Bibles daily, and with devotional feelings it may be, who have no idea that the places mentioned in sacred history, like those mentioned in any other history, can be traced on the map, can be found and visited at the present day, although disguised under modern names. It makes no part of their study of the Bible, to ascertain where the places mentioned are to be found, and what they are now called. They have no idea that the allusions to manners and customs, found in the Bible, can be understood, through an acquaintance with the practices and habits of the people described; and, consequently, the study of Jewish manners and customs makes no part of their preparation for understanding the Scriptures. They have no idea that the allusions in Scripture to facts in natural history can be verified by an acquaintance with that science; and, consequently, they make no exertions to understand the natural history of the Bible. They do not take up the Bible and read it with the expectation of being able to understand it, even in regard to these particulars, as they would understand any other book. All such are prepared, by their very ignorance on these subjects, to become the dupes of the Mormon delusion; or, rather, they are not prepared to detect and withstand this delusion. They open the Book of Mormon. The paragraphs begin with the phrase, "And behold it came to pass." They read of the cities of Zarahemla, Gid, Mulek, Corianton, and a multitude of others. They read of prophets and preachers, of faith, repentance, and obedience; and having been accustomed, in reading the Scriptures, to take all such things just as they are presented, without careful examination, they can see no reason why all this is not as much entitled to belief, as are the records of the Old and New Testaments. But if, on the contrary, they were acquainted with the geography and the natural history of the Bible, and with the manners and customs of the nations there mentioned, and especially, if, in

their reading of the Scriptures, they were accustomed to examine carefully into these points, they would at once perceive the utter impossibility of identifying the cities mentioned in the Book of Mormon, with any geographical traces which they can now make. They would thus perceive the great chance there is for deception, and would be put on their guard. And then, too, upon further examination, they would discover that the manners and customs of the people, the sentiments and disputes, are not such as belong to the period of the world in which the people are represented to have lived, that they take their colouring from modern customs, from modern opinions and controversies; and so they would, from this knowledge, and from these habits of examination, be led to reject the whole as a delusion.

Again, there prevail, in the minds of a large portion of the community, pernicious errors in regard to the influences of the Spirit. There are those, who believe that they can certainly tell, from their own feelings at the time, when the Spirit is specially operating upon their hearts; that they can distinguish the operations of the Spirit from the workings of their own minds. There are those who believe that they can tell, from the appearance of an assembly, when the Spirit of God is specially and powerfully present in "their midst." If the speaker is more than usually earnest and fluent, they believe that the Spirit of God is present to his mind, affording special assistance. If the assembly is more than usually interested, and, especially, if many are affected unto tears, they believe the Spirit of God to be powerfully operating upon the hearts of the people. The language, used by preachers and in religious periodical publications, encourages this belief. Go to the camp-meeting ground, or into a protracted meeting, and you will hear the preachers declaring that the Spirit of God is specially and powerfully present. And what is the proof? The speakers felt great freedom in laying open the truths of the gospel, and great earnestness in exhorting sinners. The people were much affected, and many were in tears. Turn to the religious periodical publications of the day, and read the accounts given of revivals. You will read, that on such an occasion, at such a meeting, the Spirit of God was visibly present. The proofs are the same as those mentioned by the preachers. Nay, more; these revivals, these special manifestations of the Spirit, are represented as proofs that the doctrines advanced at such times are the truths of the gospel, and that the measures adopted are "owned of God." The great mass of the more ignorant part of the community understand these expressions to mean what they literally purport to mean. And this, as it seems to us, has given success to many of the delusions that have prevailed. It is well known to most of our readers, we presume, that, some years since, the Cochran delusion, as it is called, prevailed in and

around Saco, a village in the State of Maine. What gave that delusion success? Why, Cochran spoke with great fluency, warned sinners with great earnestness, and poured forth his prayers with great fervour. The people were much affected. Many were in tears, many were sobbing aloud, many cried out for mercy, and some were even prostrated upon the floor. "Surely, then," those under the influence of the delusion we speak of would say, "the Spirit of God was powerfully and visibly present." "Surely," they would say, "the doctrines advanced by Cochran must be true, the measures adopted by him are 'owned of God.'" So with the Mormon delusion. The preachers are fluent, they warn sinners with earnestness, they pray with fervour; the people are affected; the Spirit of God is especially, powerfully, and visibly present; and, consequently, the opinions advanced must be correct, the measures adopted are "owned of God." In this way, men, of sound judgment in other respects, are carried away, through the influence of their erroneous views of the operations of the Spirit, and become the dupes of the delusion.

We here close our remarks upon the Book of Mormon and the causes of the success which has attended the Mormon delusion. We hope that what we have said may serve to gratify the natural curiosity of our readers upon the subject. Nay, more; we hope that it may serve to awaken them to the importance of strenuous exertions, on their part, to remove all improper prejudices, to spread abroad a correct knowledge of the sacred Scriptures and proper principles in regard to the study of the Bible, and to extend sound and rational views of the nature of religion and of the influences of the Spirit. JASON WHITMAN.

NOTICE.

In the next number of THE UNITARIAN I intend to commence a series of Letters to Unbelievers. I shall endeavour to give the subject of Infidelity a thorough discussion. Such topics as the following will claim my first attention: — the present state of unbelief; opposition to Christianity unreasonable; insufficiency of infidelity for the wants of mankind; the religious opinions of Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Franklin, and other distinguished men who have been claimed by skeptics; knowledge; belief; free inquiry; credulity of atheism; credulity of deism; serious questions to those who are engaged in spreading infidelity.

In order to accomplish the greatest possible good, I wish to present to the public an array of facts on this important subject. I would, therefore, earnestly request the friends of truth and religion to furnish me with accurate and well attested accounts of the conversion of unbelievers, carefully mentioning names, places, dates, means of conversion, and all interesting particulars. I would also request them to send me correct and well authenticated statements respecting the influence of infidelity on individuals, families, and communities, stating the vices to which it has led, the wretchedness it has produced, the instances in which it has terminated in ruin, misery, or suicide. I must ask every writer to put his name to his communications, and leave me at liberty to use the materials thus furnished, in the manner I shall deem most conducive to public good.

BERNARD WHITMAN.